CAPTAIN AMERICA

NO. 48

10¢

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CAPTAIN AMERICA

AN EVIL SHADOW--IT STALKED THE PEACEFUL COUNTRY-SIDE! AND IN ITS WAKE IT LEFT A TRAIL OF DEAD AND MANGLED BODIES! DEDICATED TO EVIL,--SPREADING TERROR,--ITS MISSION--***DEATH,***--IT WREAKED FULL HAVOC, UNTIL---***CAPTAIN AMERICA*** AND HIS PAL, ***BUCKY,*** TOOK UP ITS TRAIL OF HORROR TO ERASE FOREVER FROM THE FACE OF THE EARTH-------!

The MARK of the SATYRE!

TERROR GRIPS HALTON, A TINY TOWN IN PENNSYLVANIA, AS A GRISLY KILLER ---- STRIKES!!

EEEEEEEEEEE!

THE TOWNSPEOPLE QUICKLY GATHER AROUND THE STILL WARM BODY OF THE VICTIM!

IT'S MA PERKINS! SHE'S DEAD --- MURDERED!!

LOOK AT HER THROAT! IT'S BEEN TORN BY C-CLAWS! AND HER FORCHEAD--A--MARK! LOOK!!

THE MARK OF A --- CLOVEN HOOF!

AGAIN---!

AGHHHHHHHHHH...

---AND AGAIN---!

AHHHHHHHH...

AND AGAIN, THE SATANIC KILLER STRIKES!

THE MONSTER'S AFTER JOB STUART! SURROUND THE HOUSE! WE'VE GOT HIM NOW!

BLAST HIM!

BOOM!

CRASH

TINKLE!

TINKLE!

BOOM!

MELTING FROM THE SCENE LIKE A SHADOW, LEAVING BEHIND HIM---ONLY---!

THIS TOWN AIN'T SAFE! I'M PACKIN' MY MISSUS AND MY KIDS AND LEAVIN'!

HERE TOO! NONE OF US IS SAFE!

AND IN THE HILLS, UNAWARE OF THE TERROR THAT STALKS THE COUNTRY-SIDE,

WHO'D EVER OF THOUGHT IT? THE WHOLE SECTION'S ROTTEN WITH--? WHA--? WHO'S THAT?

HEH! HEH! HEH!

NO! GO AWAY!! I'LL SHARE WITH YOU! I SWEAR IT! I'LL MAKE YOU RICH,---RICH!!

HEH! HEH! HEH!

MEANWHILE, TWO FAMILIAR FIGURES RACE ACROSS THE COUNTRY-SIDE--- CAMP LEHIGH BOUND!

THINK WE'LL MAKE CAMP BEFORE REVILLE, CAP? (PUFF) IF OLD SWIVEL-PUSS, SARGE FINDS OUR BUNKS EMPTY, HE'LL--?

A'GHHHHHHH!

HEY! WHERE'D THAT SCREAM COME FROM?

SOUNDED LIKE IT CAME OVER THE HUMP OF THAT RIDGE!

LET'S GO! A SCREAM LIKE THAT, SPELLS MURDER, AND MURDER MEANS A CASE FOR--- CAPTAIN AMERICA!!

CAPTAIN AMERICA AND BUCKY CLIMB THE HILL. LOOK DOWN INTO THE RAVINE---!

WE'RE TOO LATE, BUCKY! WHOEVER KILLED THAT FELLOW, DID A GOOD JOB! HIS THROAT'S TORN WIDE OPEN!

LORD! WHAT KIND OF CREATURE---? CAP, LOOK! OFF TO THE LEFT!

THE KILLER! AFTER HIM! THERE'S NOTHING TO GAIN BY STAYING HERE! THIS POOR FELLOW'S BEYOND ALL HELP!

I'M RIGHT BEHIND YOU!

WHATEVER THE THING IS, IT'S FAST! I'M AFRAID WE'LL LOSE IT IN THIS BRUSH!

THERE'S OPEN MEADOW JUST AHEAD, LAD! I SAW IT WHEN WE TOPPED THE HILL! WE'LL CATCH UP WITH HIM THERE!

BUT WHEN THEY ENTER THE MEADOW!

NOTHING! IT GOT AWAY!

NOT SO FAST! IT MUST HAVE LEFT SOME KIND OF TRAIL! LOOK!

YAP! YAP! YAAAAAAP! YAAAAAAP!

YAP! YAP! YAAAAAAP! YAAAAAAP!

CAP!! D-DO Y-Y-YOU S-SEE W-WHAT I-I S-S-SEE?

I DO! HE LOOKS LIKE THE FATHER OF EVIL HIMSELF! I'M GOING AFTER HIM!

BUT AS CAPTAIN AMERICA REACHES THE SCENE, THE WEIRD FIGURE VANISHES!

WHAT'S UP? WHERE IS I-I-IT?

IT'S GONE! JUST MELTED AWAY! IF I DIDN'T SEE IT WITH MY OWN EYES, I'D NEVER BELEIVE IT!

WE'VE RUN UP AGAINST SOME WEIRD THINGS, CAP! BUT THIS TAKES THE CAKE! LOOK HERE!

THIS PROVES WE WEREN'T DREAMING! THE CREATURE LEFT IT'S MARK! THE MARK OF THE--- CLOVEN HOOF! LET'S FOLLOW IT!

THE DUO FOLLOW THE TRAIL TO HARD GROUND!

THEY'VE PETERED OUT! BUT THEY SEEM TO BE HEADING TOWARDS THAT OLD MANSION! DO WE FOLLOW?

NO, BUCKY! WE'LL TAKE THE BODY INTO TOWN AND GET THE BACK-GROUND OF THE CASE! BUT WE'LL KEEP THAT MANSION IN MIND!

LATER, THE SHERIFF'S OFFICE IN HALTON!

KNOW HIM, SHERIFF?

NEVER SEEN HIM BEFORE! NO IDENTIFICATION ON HIM, NEITHER--- HOW ABOUT YOU, JED?

I SEEN HIM SOMEPLACE, BUT---? I KNOW! HE'S THE CITY FELLER THAT COME UP ON A FISHIN' TRIP! OAFFLEY'S HIS NAME!

OAFFLEY? YOU MEAN THE FELLER THAT IS BOARDIN' WITH THE WIDOW BARCLAY?

THET'S THE ONE! COME TO TOWN 'BOUT A WEEK AGO!

A WEEK AGO, 'EH? THAT WAS JUST BEFORE THE FIRST MURDER TOOK PLACE!

YUP! BUT HE DIDN'T HAVE ANYTHING TO DO WITH THEM! IT'S A CINCH HE DIDN'T KILL HIMSELF!

NO---! TELL ME, SHERIFF! WHO LIVES IN THE OLD MANSION OUTSIDE OF TOWN?

OLD PIERRE LABALE! COME TO TOWN 'BOUT TWENTY YEARS AGO! BOUGHT THE MANSION AND SET UP HIS WAX WORKS IN IT!

WAX WORKS? YOU MEAN THE MUSEUM KIND?

THAT'S RIGHT! HAS HUNDREDS OF FIGURES THERE! ALL THE FAMOUS AND INFAMOUS CHARACTER'S OF HISTORY MODELED IN WAX!

BUT WHY PICK THIS TOWN?

USED TO HAVE CONSIDERABLE INDUSTRY FIFTEEN YEAR AGO!

THAT'S RIGHT! WE AIN'T GOT NOTHIN'!

THAT FINISHED LABALE! HAD A STROKE AN' BEEN CONFINED EVER SINCE! HIS NEPHEW COMES DOWN FOR SUPPLIES! MUSEUM'S BEEN SHUT UP TOO!

THE TWO OF 'EM STAY ALL ALONE WITH THAT GRUESOME COLLECTION! GOSH, I REMEMBER ONE OF THE FIGURES! CALLED THE SATYRE! AN---?

SATYRE??

YEAH! YOU'D ALMOST THINK IT WAS ALIVE! HIS GREAT-GREAT-GRAND-FATHER CREATED IT, NEAR A HUNDRED YEARS AGO! SPOOKY THING!

WHAT'S UP, CAP?

JUST A HUNCH, BUCKY! WE'RE GOING TO VISIT OLD LABALE! BUT FIRST WE'LL STOP OFF AT THE WIDOW BARCLAY'S!

THE WIDOW BARCLAY'S!

THIS IS MR. OAFFLEY'S ROOM! SUCH A GENTLEMAN HE WAS! AND NOW-- (SNIFF-SNIFF) I HOPE YOU CATCH THAT MURDEROUS BEAST!

WE'RE GOING TO TRY, MA'AM!

A THOROUGH SEARCH BRINGS SEVERAL CURIOUS THINGS TO LIGHT---

WHY THE THOUGHTFUL LOOK, CAP?

OAFFLEY WAS A PHONEY, KID! HIS REAL NAME'S PAUL COWLES, A GEOLOGIST FOR EASTERN PETROLEUM INC.! AND HERE'S SOMETHING ELSE!

WHAT'S?

JUST SAND, ORDINARY SAND! BUT I'M BEGINNING TO SEE WHAT THIS IS ALL ABOUT! C'MON! WE'RE GOING TO PAY OLD LABALE A VISIT!

SAY! WHAT HAS SAND GOT TO DO WITH MURDER?

LATER, LAD! THERE'S A FEW PIECES TO THIS PUZZLE MISSING! I THINK WE'LL FIND THEM IN THE MUSEUM!

LATER, THE MUSEUM!

GOSH! THIS PLACE GIVES ME THE CREEPS!

YES! A PERFECTS SETTING FOR SPOOKS AND --- SATYRES!

THE DUO'S KNOCK IS ANSWERED!

YES--? CAPTAIN AMERICA! THIS IS A PLEASURE!

THANK YOU! I'D LIKE TO SEE PIERRE LABALE!

OF COURSE! HE'S IN THE LIBRARY! 'ER--- ALLOW ME TO INTRODUCE MYSELF--- BRET LABALE---!

GOOD! I'D HOPED YOU'D BE HERE! THERE ARE A FEW QUESTIONS I'D LIKE TO ASK YOU AND YOUR UNCLE!

MINUTES LATER, HAVING EXPLAINED THE NATURE OF THEIR MISSION---!

--AND THE MONSTER WAS HEADING FOR YOUR PLACE! SINCE, WE'VE HEARD MUCH ABOUT A FIGURE WAX CALLED THE SATYRE!

YOU THINK THAT OUR SATYRE, IS THIS KILLER? HO! HO! THIS IS SO FUNNY, MY DEAR SIR!

HE DID NOT SAY THAT, BRET! HE'S MERELY TRYING TO GET TO THE BOTTOM OF THIS HORRIBLE BUSINESS!

NOR SHOULD YOU LAUGH! MESSIEURS, THE FIGURE WAS CREATED BY MY GREAT-GREAT-GRANDFATHER! HE CAPTURED IT'S TRUE SPIRIT OF EVIL! FROM MY EARLIES YOUTH, IT WAS TO ME A THING OF HORROR!

IT SEEMS TO HAVE GROWN MORE EVIL WITH THE YEARS! I HAVE BEEN DEATHLY AFRAID OF IT! I CANNOT EXPLAIN IT'S POWER! YOU WILL HAVE TO SEE THAT FOR YOURSELVES!

IF YOU WILL BE SO KIND AS TO SHOW US---!

I'LL SHOW YOU THE BLOODY, OLD NIGHTMARE! FOLLOW ME!

THE MUSEUM STARTS HERE! YOU SEE THE FIGURES OF FAMOUS PERSONALITIES IN HISTORY! AND HERE, IS THE ENTRANCE TO THE GROTTO! THE SATYRE IS FIRST! I'LL LEAVE YOU! GOOD LUCK! HA! HA!

HUMPH! WHAT'S HE LAUGHING ABOUT?

THAT'S JUST TO COVER HIS FEAR, LAD! HE'S SCARED!

HE CHAMBER of HORRORS!!

CAP!! W-W-WHAT W-W-WAS T-T-THAT?

DOOBABLY MICE IN THE WALLS! STOP SHAKING! THESE THINGS CAN'T HURT YOU! LET'S HAVE A LOOK AT THAT SATYRE! IT IS SUPPOSED TO BE AT THE BOTTOM OF THE STAIRS!

SCREECH! EEEECH!

THE BASE OF THE SATYRE! AND--- AND IT'S--- EMPTY!

BUT WHAT HAPP--? BUCKY, A SCREAM! IT CAME FROM UP-STAIRS! C'MON!

A'GHHHHHHH

SOMETHING'S FUNNY HERE, KID! THE SATYRE IS SUPPOSED TO BE AT THE BOTTOM OF THE STAIRS, GUARDING THE GROTTO! BUT-I DON'T---?

CAP! CAP,--- LOOK!!

RACING BACK UPSTAIRS--

THE SCREAM CAME FROM THE LIBRARY! KID, LOOK! THE WHEEL-CHAIR--- IT'S EMPTY!

THERE'S SOMETHING ON THE FLOOR! IT'S BLOOD! WHO COULD HAVE DONE THIS?

THE KILLER LEFT HIS CALLING CARD IN THE POOL OF BLOOD! THE MARK OF THE CLOVEN HOOF!

THE SATYRE AGAIN! CAP! IS THIS TRUE OR ARE WE DREAMING?

MURDER ISN'T A DREAM, KID! AND NEITHER IS THAT TRAIL OF BLOOD! WE'VE GOT TO CATCH THAT MONSTROUS THING AND CATCH IT---FAST!

LEAD ON, CAP! I'LL BE TRAILING A CLOSE SECOND!

THE BLOODY TRAIL LEADS INTO THE HALL, VEERS AND CONTINUES TOWARDS THE ENTRANCE TO THE GROTTO! THEN--- SUDDENLY!!

RACING ON THE WEIRD CREATURE'S TRAIL, THEY FOLLOW TO THE ENTRANCE OF THE CHAMBER OF HORRORS---THEN!!

CAP, THE SATYRE! AND HE'S CARRYING PIERRE'S BODY!

STEP IT UP! WE CAN'T LET HIM GET AWAY THIS TIME!

CAP!

PRETTY TERRIBLE, ISN'T IT, KID? BUT IT CAN'T HURT YOU! IT'S MADE OF WAX, LOOK!

I SAY---WHAT HAPPENED? I HEARD A SCREAM AND--? UNCLE! UNCLE PIERRE!

I'M SORRY, BRETT! YOUR UNCLE'S--DEAD!!

YES! KILLED BY THE THING HE FEARED SO! THE---- SATYRE!!

TAP! TAP!

SATYRE ?? I DON'T BELIEVE IT ! IT CAN'T BE ! THERE'S SOMETHING TERRIBLE HERE ! SOMETHING WE CAN'T HANDLE ! I'M GOING TO CALL THE POLICE AND---AND DOCTOR !

WAIT A MINUTE, YOU CAN'T ?

LET HIM GO, BUCKY ! HERE, HELP ME TAKE DOWN PIERRE'S BODY ! WE'RE WINDING THIS CASE UP TONIGHT, AND HERE'S HOW WE'LL DO IT---!

SECONDS LATER !

YOU SAY THE SATYRE ISN'T RESPONSIBLE FOR THESE KILLINGS ?

THAT'S RIGHT, BUCKY ! BUT I KNOW WHO IS ! I ALSO KNOW WHY ! THE WHOLE THING MUST HAVE STARTED WHEN PAUL COWLES ALIAS MR. DAFFLEY DISCOVERED THE THING HE CAME TO THESE HILLS TO SEEK ! YOU REMEMBER THE SAND ?

THE DIM LIGHTS IN THE CHAMBER, SUDDENLY FLICKER OUT------!

THAT SAND GAVE ME THE CLUE AS TO THE MOTIVE IN THESE KILLINGS ! YOU SEE, KID--- SHOWED A DEFINITE PROOF---? THE LIGHT'S !! PREPARE FOR ACTION !

CAP, LOOK ! THE SATYRE---IT'S MOVING !!

YAP ! YAP ! YAAAAAAP !

AND HEARTBEATS LATER, FLICKER ON AGAIN, REVEALING---!

WHA ! WHA ! IT'S GONE !!

AND I KNOW WHERE ! COME ON, BUCKY ! THIS IS ACT THREE AND THE CURTAIN'S ABOUT TO GO DOWN ON THE--- SATYRE !

PASSING HIS FINGERS LIGHTLY OVER THE WALL BEHIND THE SATYRE'S BASE, CAPTAIN AMERICA LOCATES A SLIGHT BREAK IN THE EVEN SURFACE AND PRESSES !

I'M CONVINCED THERE'S A SECRET PANEL HERE ! LET'S SEE--- AH, HERE IT IS !

CLICK !

I'LL BE--- SO THAT'S HOW OUR FRIEND DISAPPEARED !

BUT BEHIND THE PASSAGE THE SATYRE LURKS AND AS THE DUO PUSH THRU IT INTO THE PASSAGE BEHIND!

NOW WHERE--? CAP! LOOK OUT!

WHA--?

TOO LATE! HEH! HEH! HEH! DIE, CAPTAIN AMERICA! DIE!!

TWO NOOSES DROP AROUND THEIR SHOULDERS AND A TRAP-DOOR OPENS BENEATH THEIR FEET---!

TRAPPED, LIKE--LIKE RABBITS!

AYE! AND NOW I'LL BE ABLE TO FINISH MY WORK IN THE VILLAGE! BUT BEFORE I LEAVE THIS HOUSE, I SHALL SET IT AFIRE! YOU WILL DIE LIKE RAT'S IN THE FLAMES! HEH! HEH!

BUT CAPTAIN AMERICA HAS OTHER IDEAS, AND AS THE WEIRD CREATURE STEPS THROUGHT THE PANEL INTO THE GROTTO, HE---!

WHAT'RE YOU DOING, CAP?

GETTING OUT OF HERE! I'LL HAVE YOU FREE IN A SECOND, KID!

THAT'S WHAT'S NEEDED TO CAPTURE THAT MONSTER, LAD! COME ON, NOW, AFTER HIM!

LOOSENING THE ROPE FROM HIS SHOULDERS, CAP SWARMS UP IT TO THE EDGE OF THE PIT, AND GRASPING THE ROPE AROUND BUCKY, HAULS HIM ALONGSIDE---!

THAT WAS FAST THINKING, CAP!

AND FLASHING THROUGH THE PANEL ON THE MONSTER'S HEELS, CATCH HIM AS HE SMASHES HIS LIGHTED LANTERN, SENDING FLAMES ROARING THROUGH THE GROTTO!

YOU!!

THAT'S RIGHT, PAL, US! AND THE END OF YOU!

MAKE THIS FAST, BUCKY! THIS PLACE WILL GO UP LIKE PAPER!

AND---

QUICK, CAP! I CAN'T HOLD HIM MUCH LONGER!

THIS WILL HOLD HIM, KID!

WHAM!

YOU MEDDLE-SOME--- OOOO!

BRET LABALE!! BUT, CAP! HOW - WHAT ---? I DON'T UNDERSTAND! THE SATYRE! HOW DID HE---?

YOU'LL PROBABLY WANT TO KNOW WHO THIS IS, BUCKY! LOOK!!

CAPTAIN AMERICA REVEALS THE MYSTERY OF THE VANISHING SATYRE!

THAT WAS THE CLEVEREST PART OF THE MASQUERADE, BUCKY! THE SATYRE NEVER LEFT IT'S BASE! WATCH!!

I THINK I'M BEGINNING TO GET IT! THE SATYRE WAS MOUNTED ON ONE SIDE OF THE PANEL, AND WHEN IT WAS SWUNG AROUND, IT---!

APPEARED AND DISAPPEARED AT WILL! COME! WE'VE GOT TO GET OUT OF HERE! WE'LL TAKE BRET ALIAS THE SATYRE WITH US! AS FOR THE REAL SATYRE.. HE CAN GO UP IN FLAME WITH THE OTHERS!

AMEN! THERE'S NOTHING LIKE A GOOD FIRE TO CLEANSE THE COUNTRY-SIDE OF EVIL!

LEAVING THE KILLER TO THE MERCY OF THE SHERIFF AND THE LAW HE REPRESENTS, THE DUO RESUME THEIR TRIP TO CAMP LEHIGH!

I KNOW BRET'S REASON FOR THE MASQUERADE AND KILLINGS WAS TO DRIVE THE TOWNSPEOPLE FROM THEIR LAND SO HE COULD BUY IT CHEAPLY AFTER HE HAD DISCOVERED THAT PAUL COWLES HAD FOUND OIL ON IT, BUT HOW DID YOU KNOW? WHERE DID YOU FIRST SUSPECT THAT?

WHEN WE DISCOVERED THE VIAL OF SAND IN COWLES ROOM! THAT SAND WAS AN OIL SAMPLE!

AS FOR THE SATYRE ITSELF--- THERE WERE ONLY TWO PEOPLE WHO COULD HAVE WORKED THAT MASQUERADE! PIERRE LABALE AND HIS NEPHEW! WHEN BRET, SUSPECTING MY DISBELIEF OF A SATYRE, KILLED HIS UNCLE TO CONVINCE ME THAT SUCH A CREATURE DID EXIST, HE ELIMINATED HIS UNCLE AS SUCH, AND POINTED TO HIS **OWN GUILT!**

THE END

THE HUMAN TORCH
VS THE
DOCTOR OF DEATH

OUR STORY OPENS WITH TWO FAMILIAR FIGURES IN THEIR NEW YORK APARTMENT.

DID YOU SEE THIS, TORO?

THE PORTRAIT ROBBERY?! ...YES!... THAT'S THE FOURTH IN TWO WEEKS!... CAN'T THE POLICE DO ANYTHING?!!

NO CLUES!... THE GANG'S CLEVER AND WELL ORGANIZED! ...STOLEN PORTRAITS ARE HARD TO SELL! ...YET THESE THIEVES HAVE SNATCHED OVER A DOZEN!... I WONDER?!!

WHEN YOU WONDER IT MEANS ACTION! ...WHAT'S STIRRING IN THAT BRAIN OF YOURS?

THE GANG HAS SYSTEMATICALLY CHOSEN THE BEST PORTRAITS IN THIS SECTION, BUT SO FAR THE FINEST OF ALL HASN'T BEEN TOUCHED!

REMBRANDT'S SELF PORTRAIT! ...IN THE ANDERSON COLLECTION!... DO YOU THINK THEY'LL...?

IT'S WORTH A TRY!... COME ON!... MAYBE ANDERSON KNOWS OF SOMETHING SUSPICOUS!

YOU MEAN LIKE STICKY FINGER CHARACTERS HANGING AROUND? ....OKAY!

MINUTES LATER OVER THE LONG ISLAND ESTATE OF CLIVE ANDERSON, MILLIONAIRE COLLECTOR...

EEEEEEE!

A SCREAM!

YES! I HEAR IT! ...COMING FROM THE TOP FLOOR!

DA TORCH!

TAKE 'EM, BUGS ...WE GOTTA GET THIS PAINTING OUTTA HERE!

GET THOSE TWO MORONS TORO! I'LL STOP THE OTHERS!

HOT TORCH!

TORCH FLAMES OUT TO PROTECT THE PRICELESS PAINTING FROM HIS INTENSE HEAT!

WE'LL SETTLE THIS WITHOUT GUNS, BUGS!

OH, OH, KNOCKED HIM RIGHT INTO THE ELEVATOR!

DOWN WITH IT-- QUICK!

POW

CAN'T FLAME AFTER THEM!... MIGHT BURN THE PORTRAIT! ...WONDER HOW TORO IS MAKING OUT?!!

TORO'S DOING ALL RIGHT!

WHAT DO YOU SAY TORCH?!... A LITTLE CLOSER TO MAKE THEM TALK?!

AGHHH..OOHH! DON'T COME ANY CLOSER! WE'LL TALK!

OKAY, TORO... CALL THE POLICE WHILE I HEAR THEIR SONG!

COME ON, MUGS, START WARBLING OR I LIGHT UP!

TH...THE HIDEOUT IS IN THE LAST HOUSE ON SLATE STREET! ...IT...IT'S A DEAD END!

IN A FEW MINUTES...

PUT THESE GENTLEMEN OF THE UNDERWORLD IN A STRONG CELL, CHIEF!

YES, WE MAY WANT TO SEE THEM AGAIN IN CASE THEY'VE GIVEN US THE WRONG ADDRESS!

LET'S GO, TORO!... TO THE LAST HOUSE ON SLATE STREET!

IT'S ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE TRACKS!

THAT'S IT! DO WE LOOK THE GROUNDS OVER FIRST?

NO!... WE'RE NOT FOOLING AROUND! ... LET'S JUST BARGE RIGHT IN!

WOW! LOOK AT THAT PILE OF DOUGH!

ALL FROM PORTRAITS!... LET'S FRAME THEM, TORO!

SO IT'S PICTURES YOU GUYS DEAL IN! WELL, SEE WHAT YOU CAN GET FOR THIS ONE!

ULP! HEY!! WE'VE BEEN FRAMED!

ALL RIGHT, YOU MUGS!... THIS ISN'T A PARTY GAME! ...WHERE'S THE PORTRAIT?! TALK!!... OR WE'LL GIVE YOU A BETTER IDEA OF YOUR HEREAFTER!

IT'S GONE! I SWEAR IT!... SEE, THERES THE DOUGH FOR IT!

WE'RE ASKING WHERE THE PORTRAIT IS!... ANSWER THE QUESTION OR I'LL HUG YOU BEAUTIFUL!

A PRIVATE COLLECTOR BOUGHT IT!... WE AIN'T NEVER SEEN HIM!... ALL WE GOT IS HIS PHONE NUMBER!... WE CALL HIM WHEN WE MAKE A SNATCH! ...HE SENDS A MESSENGER OVER TO PAY AND COLLECT THE CANVAS!

A PHONE NUMBER, EH?... WE'LL TIE THESE BABIES UP FOR THE POLICE!

TAKING THE PHONE NUMBER, THE DUO FIRST MAKE SURE OF THE MOBSTERS, THEN....

HOW ARE WE GOING TO LOCATE THIS HIGHER UP, TORCH?!

THROUGH INFORMATION! SHE'LL GIVE US THE ADDRESS OF THE HOUSE WHERE THE PHONE IS!

SOME MINUTES LATER, WITH THE INFORMATION THEY SOUGHT.

MR. DANBURY FAWCETT!... THE NAME IS FAMILIAR!

HE WAS ONCE THE WORLD'S GREATEST ART COLLECTOR!... IN RECENT YEARS, HE'S BECOME A RECLUSE, NEVER STIRRING FROM HIS ESTATE!... WE'LL HAVE TO GO EASY!... IT'S POSSIBLE THAT LUG GAVE US THE WRONG STEER!

HERE WE ARE!... WE'LL FLAME OUT AND ENTER RESPECTABLY BY THE FRONT DOOR!

A FEW MINUTES LATER

THE TORCH AND TORO! ... THIS IS A PLEASURE! WHAT CAN I DO FOR YOU?!

WE'RE LOOKING FOR A STOLEN PORTRAIT!... AS A COLLECTOR WE THOUGHT YOU MIGHT HAVE BOUGHT IT, INNOCENTLY OF COURSE!

WHY I 'ER DID BUY ONE RECENTLY!...I HARDLY THINK IT'S.... BUT IF YOU'LL STEP THIS WAY, YOU CAN SEE FOR YOURSELVES!

THANK YOU!

IS THIS YOUR PORTRAT GALLERY?...IT'S KIND OF DARK!

YES!..I KEEP THE BLINDS DOWN TO PROTECT THE PAINTINGS FROM SUNLIGHT, YOU KNOW! ...WON'T YOU STEP IN?!

THROWN OFF GUARD BY THEIR HOST'S CHARMING MANNERS TORCH AND TORO CATCH ON, BUT TOO LATE!

SLAM

YOU WISH TO SEE MY PORTRAITS! ...FOOLS!...ALL YOU'LL SEE IS DEATH!

I WAS WARNED THAT YOU'D COME AND GOT PREPARED!.. I'LL RETURN FOR YOUR BODIES AND TAKE STEPS TO SEE THAT THEY'RE NEVER FOUND!... NEVER! HA, HA, HA!!

LOCKING THE DOOR, FAWCETT ENTERS A ROOM NEXT TO IT AND TURNS GAS INTO THE DUO'S CHAMBER.

THESE WALLS ARE ASBESTOS! ...AND....HEY, WHAT'S COOKIN' WITH THAT GAS ENGINE?!

I'VE A HUNCH IT'S GOING TO COOK US!...HE'S USING IT TO PUMP CARBON MONOXIDE IN HERE!

NEVER!! HA, HA, HA!" ... HE'S MAD! BUT HE HAS SCOTCHED US GOOD!

YOU SAID IT, TORO! ...WE CAN'T FLAME ON....THAT'S CERTAIN! .... BUT WAIT!... THERE'S ONE THING HE FORGOT! ... WHEN THE EXHAUST OF A GAS ENGINE IS CHOKED IT STALLS!... CLIMB ON MY SHOULDERS, TORO!

TORO PLUGS THE END OF THE EXHAUST PIPE AND THE ENGINE CHOKES OFF TO A DEAD STOP!

IT'S STOPPED! NOW WHAT, TORCH?!

NOW WE WAIT FOR OUR FRIEND TO COME BACK FOR OUR DEAD BODIES!... AND WHEN HE DOES ... OH, BOY!

SOME TIME LATER FAWCETT RETURNS

HAW, HA, HA, I SEE THE GAS HAS DONE ITS WORK!...

AWK!

SURPRISE! YOU MURDEROUS MANIAC!

AND NOW, YOU SCOUNDREL, WE'LL VISIT THE REAL GALLERY!

LOOK, TORCH! THE REMBRANDT!

HE'S OUR MAN! ALL RIGHT!

YES, I HAD THEM STOLEN! I HAD A A LIST OF THE GREATEST PORTRAITS IN THE COUNTRY!... I WANTED THEM ALL..... I TRIED TO BUY THEM, BUT THEY WOULDN'T SELL!... BUT I HAD TO HAVE THEM!..... I HAD TO.! HA! HA! HA!

HA, HA, HA! AND NOW YOU CAN MAKE YOUR OWN ON THE PRISON WALLS!

THE END

"THE CORPSE THAT WASN'T THERE"

CAPTAIN AMERICA AND HIS PAL BUCKY FACE THEIR TOUGHEST PROBLEM IN TRYING TO SOLVE THE MYSTERIOUS AND BEWILDERING *Case of the* MISSING DEAD...!!

CAPTAIN AMERICA

TWO FAMILIAR FIGURES, CAPTAIN AMERICA AND BUCKY, RACE THROUGH THE DESERTED STREETS OF A SLEEPING CITY---!

ANOTHER COUPLE OF HOURS, BUCKY, AND WE'LL BE BACK AT THE OLD GRINDSTONE AGAIN!

POTATO PEELER WOULD BE MORE LIKE--? CAP--- LOOK!!

HELP! OH, PLEASE--- HELP ME!

THE DUO RACE TO THE RESCUE!

OH! DON'T LET HIM GET---? OOOOOOO!

WHAT THE---? FAINTED!

HOLD ON TO HER, CAP! I'LL SNAG LOTHARIO!

BUT THE GIRL'S PURSUER DUCKS INTO A DARK ALLEY AND AS BUCKY FOLLOWS---!

MEANWHILE, CAP HAS HAILED A PASSING CAB--- AND AS BUCKY RETURNS---

YOU MEDDLESOME FOOL!

OHHHHH!

CRACK

THAT MONKEY GOT AWAY BUT HE LEFT THIS SOUVENIR!

WE'LL PAY HIM OFF, KID! BUT FIRST WE'VE GOT TO GET THIS GIRL TO A DOCTOR! HER LIPS ARE TURNING BLUE!

TAXI

AS THEIR C[illegible] PULLS OUT, A BLAC[illegible]CAR WITHOUT LIGHT[illegible] FOLLOWS!

SAINT MARY'S HOSPITAL, DRIVER! AND MAKE IT SNAPPY!

YES, SIR!

SOME MINUTES LATER!!

GOSH, STEVE! SHE HASN'T MOVED! D'YOU THINK SHE'S REAL SICK?

SICK? NO, LAD! SHE'S --DEAD--! NEVER MIND THE EMERGENCY ROOM, DRIVER! PULL UP ALONGSIDE THE MORGUE!

AS STEVE AND BACKY ENTER THE MORGUE FOR AN ATTENDANT, THE DRIVER OF THE CAR THAT'S TAILED THEM!

T.S. THINGS AREN'T GOING QUITE, ACCORDING TO PLAN...!

STEPS SOFTLY UP BEHIND THE UNSUSPECTING CABBIE, AND---

BUT I'LL MAKE THEM DO! HA! HA! HA! I'LL MAKE THEM DO...!

OOOOO!

AND WHEN STEVE AND BUCKY RETURN WITH AN ATTENDANT---!

HERE! THE BODY'S IN THE---? IT'S GONE!

SAY! WHAT IS THIS? ARE YOU TRYING TO KID ME?

CAP, LOOK! THE DRIVER! HE'S BEEN SLUGGED!

DOES THIS LOOK LIKE A JOKE? SOMEONE SLUGGED OUR DRIVER AND STOLE THAT BODY! HERE! GET HIM TO A DOCTOR! WE'LL TAKE CARE OF THAT JOKER!

OKAY, FELLER! IT'S YOUR PARTY!

WHAT'S THIS ALL ABOUT? WHY SHOULD ANYONE WANT TO STEAL A CORPSE?

THAT WE'RE GOING TO FIND OUT! H'MM! WHAT'S THIS? HER EVENING-BAG! MAYBE IT WILL AT LEAST TELL US WHO SHE WAS!

YOU KNOW, CAP? I HAVE THE FEELING THAT I'VE SEEN HER SOMEPLACE! IS THERE ANYTHING IN HER BAG?

I'LL SAY! SHE'S MATILDA CARSON, HEIRESS TO THE CARSON COPPER FORTUNE! SHE MADE HER DEBUT A COUPLE OF YEARS AGO! MADE THE FRONT PAGE OF EVERY PAPER IN THE CITY!

THAT'S IT! HER PARENTS DIED IN A PLANE CRASH! SAY! D'YOU SUPPOSE SHE WAS MURDERED SOMEHOW?

WE'RE GOING TO FIND OUT! SHE LIVES ALONE IN ONE OF THOSE SWANKY APARTMENT HOUSES, NEAR WHERE WE PICKED HER UP! AND WE'RE GOING TO PAY IT A VISIT!

SOME MINUTES LATER, OUTSIDE THE APARTMENT HOUSE---!

WAHOO!

APARTMENT 4-J! THAT WOULD BE THE LIGHTED ONE ON THE TENTH FLOOR! THERE'S SOMEONE IN IT!

COULD BE THE SNATCHER! WE'LL CLIMB THE FIRE-ESCAPE AND SURPRISE HIM FROM THE REAR!

BUT THE SURPRISES ARE REVERSED, FOR AS THE DUO LAUNCH THEMSELVES THROUGH THE WINDOW, A STRETCHED ROPE---!

TACKLE HIM, LAD!

RIGHT, CAP! HEY!

TRIPS THEM!

A STRETCHED ROPE AND A DUMMY! WE'RE EXPECTED!

HA! HA! BUT, NATURALLY! I BLUNDERED IN LEAVING THAT HAND-BAG IN THE CAB!

AND A FIGURE STEPS FROM THE SHADOWS TO ---

BUT I'LL BLUNDER NO MORE!

OOOOO!

YOU MURDEROUS VERMIN! I'LL GET YOU FOR THAT!

SOME OTHER DAY, LITTLE MAN!

YOU--- YOU.....!

MY WORK HERE IS FINISHED! AS FOR THOSE TWO, THEY MAY LIVE! TO KILL THEM WOULD SPOT-LIGHT MY CONNECTION WITH MATILDA! NOR WILL THEY EVER DREAM THAT IT IS I WHO KILLED HER AND SET THIS NEAT TRAP FOR THEM!

THE KILLER LEAVES, AND IT IS MINUTES BEFORE CAPTAIN AMERICA AND BUCKY REVIVE!

WHEW! WHERE IS THE BRICK WALL THAT HIT ME?

IT CLIMBED OUT THE WINDOW --- AND IT MUST HAVE BEEN THE KILLER! I WONDER WHAT HE WANTED IN HERE? C'MON, LET'S LOOK THE PLACE OVER!

IN THE LIVING-ROOM, CAPTAIN AMERICA MAKES A DISCOVERY!

CORDIALS FOR TWO --- GLASSES AND TABLE WIPED CLEAN OF PRINTS! AND --- OH! OH! THIS GLASS CONTAINED SOMETHING MORE DEADLY! I'M BEGINNING TO GET A PICTURE OF THIS CASE, KID! IT'S NOT PRETTY!

HOW ABOUT LETTING ME IN ON IT?

NOT YET, LAD! THERE'S STILL PLENTY TO BE EXPLAINED! WHAT'VE YOU GOT THERE?

JUST A PHONE NUMBER OF A TAXI-CAB COMPANY! WHAT'S THE MATTER?

NOTHING, BUCKY! IT'S JUST ANOTHER PIECE TO THE PUZZLE! C'MON! WE'RE GOING TO THE NEWSPAPER MORGUE! I WANT TO LOOK UP THE GIRL'S BACKGROUND IN THEIR FILES!

HIT THE MERRY-GO-ROUND, CAP! I'M RIGHT BEHIND YOU!

SOME MINUTES LATER ---

I HOPE THE COP ON THE BEAT DOESN'T SPOT US! HE'LL THINK WE'RE SECOND STORY WORKERS!

HE WON'T --- AND AS FOR THE CLARION --- I DON'T THINK THEY'LL MIND IF WE USE THEIR FILES IN A GOOD CAUSE!

DAILY

JANUARY 3RD! THAT'S TOMORROW! AND NOW, SHE'S DEAD...MURDERED! BUCKY! THERE'S TOO MUCH COINCIDENCE HERE!

SOCIALITES KILLED IN PLANE CRASH!

LAIRD CARSON, UNCLE OF ACCIDENT VICTIM NAMED ESTATE ADMISISTRATOR! LAW FIRM REVEALS CARSON COPPER FORTUNE TO GO TO LAWSON FOUNDATION IN EVENT OF DAUGHTER'S DEATH!

MATILDA CARSON INHERITS COPPER FORTUNE JANUARY 3RD, COMES OF AGE ON 21ST BIRTHDAY!

BUT WHO GAINS BY HER DEATH! JUST THE FOUNDATION! SURELY, YOU DON'T SUSPECT THEM?

NOW, I'VE GOT IT! WHY DIDN'T I THINK OF IT BEFORE! IT'S THE ONLY POSSIBLE EXPLANATION FOR THE MURDER METHOD! EVERYTHING TIES IN! LET'S GO, LAD!

WHERE?

TO PAY, LAIRD CARSON, MATILDA'S UNCLE AND GUARDIAN A VISIT! I'VE GOT A HUNCH IT'LL PROVE INTERESTING!

I DON'T GET IT, CAP! BUT I'LL TRAIL ALONG!

..WHICH SET'S OFF AN ALARM IN CARSON'S STUDY!

SO! THE GREAT CAPTAIN AMERICA COMES! I SHALL BE READY!

SOMETIME LATER, THE DUO REACH THE CARSON HOME AND RACE THROUGH THE GATE... BREAKING AN AUTOMATIC LIGHT BEAM!

THIS IS IT, CAP! TELL ME ONE THING BEFORE WE BUST IN ON HIM! HOW WAS MATILDA CARSON MURDERED?

REMEMBER THE CORDIAL GLASSES IN HER APARTMENT? ONE OF THEM CONTAINED A SLOW POISON! RUNNING, STIMULATED HER BLOOD AND MADE IT REACT FASTER! THAT'S WHY SHE DIED IN THE STREET!

AND AS CAPTAIN AMERICA AND BUCKY BURST INTO THE ROOM---

WELL...! THE GREAT CRIME-BUSTER HIMSELF! TO WHAT DO I OWE THIS VISIT?

MURDER, CARSON! THE MURDER OF YOUR NIECE!

HMM?

CARSON IS PREPARED---!

YES, KID! HE'S BEEN STEALING FROM THE ESTATE! HE KNEW HE'D BE DISGRACED WHEN HIS NIECE CAME OF AGE AND THE WILL WAS PROBATED, SO HE KILLED HER!

VERY CLEVER! BUT I'M AFRAID YOUR DEDUCTIONS WILL NEVER BECOME PUBLIC!

LOOK OUT, CAP! TROUBLE COMING UP!

CARSON'S REINFORCEMENTS AND CAPTAIN AMERICA --- CLASH!!

BAM!

OOOF!

SOCK!

CATCH, BUCKY!

OKEY, CAP!

BUCKY, LOOK OUT!

THANKS, CAP! I'LL DO THE SAME FOR YOU SOMEDAY!

THE DUO CLEAN HOUSE QUICKLY, AND CARSON SEEING HIS MEN GO DOWN LIKE TEN-PINS!

THAT'S THAT! AND NOW, FOR--? CARSON, CAP! HE'S GOT A GUN!

YES! AND I'M GOING TO--? WHOOF!

YOU MEAN, HE HAD A GUN! CALL POLICE IN, BUCKY!

SWISH!

YOU HAVE NOTHING ON ME! I WASN'T NEAR MATILDA WHEN SHE DIED!

BUT WHY SHOULD I WANT HER TO DIE IN THE CAB AND THEN FOLLOW AND STEAL HER BODY?

THEN HOW'D YOU KNOW SHE'S DEAD? YOU SLIPPED POISON IN HER CORDIAL AND THEN CALLED A CAB! YOU INTENDED HER TO DIE IN IT! BUT SHE BROKE FROM YOU AND RAN INTO THE STREET! THE ACTION SPEEDED THE POISON TO HER HEART!

THE POLICE ARE ON THE WAY, CAP!

SO THE DRIVER WOULD RECOGNIZE HER AND REPORT THE DEATH! WITH HER DEATH REPORTED BUT HER **BODY MISSING**, THE ESTATE WOULD REMAIN IN YOUR HANDS FOR **SEVEN YEARS**, ALLOWING YOU TO REPLACE THE THEFTS!

CARSON BREAKS

YOU'VE GOT ME! I CONFESS EVERYTHING! I DID KILL HER! I DID FOLLOW YOU AND STEAL THE BODY! IT'S IN THE BASEMENT! BUT I ALMOST GOT AWAY WITH IT! HA! HA! **ALMOST...!**

BUT LIKE ALL CRIMES, **ALMOST** ISN'T GOOD ENOUGH! YOU'LL HAVE A LONG TIME TO MEDITATE ON ONE SIMPLE LITTLE TRUTH AND THAT'S...

CRIME DOESN'T PAY!!

THE END

Cooked to a T

HAP Kingston had been gone a long time. So long in fact, that he had hoped Mike (The Chink) Wadsley and his gang would have forgotten about Hap Kingston. Mike at least. But he hadn't forgotten.

Stirring the stew thoughtfully, Hap thought back to those days, when Mike Wadsley and his crowd had been growing stronger and stronger. They'd taken only "little jobs" at first but later, growing more experienced, they'd branched out into bigger and better fields. Mike and his crowd had been smart. Or Mike had. They'd always beat the law.

Mike had engineered everything, just as he had engineered Hap into a final deal, involving the corner grocery store where Hap worked after school. Old man Peters had a good business. Saturday nights his cash box was always full. It stayed so till Monday morning.

That was where Hap had come in. Mike was shrewd enough to get certain information out of Hap about the store and the stoop-shouldered old proprietor before tipping his hand.

Once Mike knew there were no burglar alarms, knew that Mr. Peters slept in the rooms up stairs where he had a safe hidden, Mike went ahead with his own plans, and it wasn't until almost ten days later, after the old man was found pretty badly mauled, that Hap knew Mike had gone through with it.

By then Hap had made up his mind. When Mike Wadsley came around later to "talk business," the cops were on hand to do a little talking themselves.

"I'll get even!" Mike Wadsley had promised in a sullen, snarling voice. "Stool pigeon. You'll get yours—if it takes me the rest of my life to dish it out!"

Mike Wadsley was sent up river for a good many years, and old man Peters recovered.

* * * * *

HAP Kingston limped slowly across the little room, stood looking out across the rolling hills, brown and still under the afternoon sunlight. He'd earned this vacation . . .

With Mike (The Chink) Wadsley out of the way behind bars, Hap had gone about his business, finishing school, and working in the store with old man Peters evenings. Later when he had graduated, he took a full time job with the old man. And a little while later . . . . War was declared and Hap Kingston went to work for Uncle Sam.

It wasn't a bad job. It had its moments . . both tough and humorous. Keeping the grub rolling had been a big job. Hap had done well. Until he'd been bombed out of a truck taking him up front.

After that he came back to the States. It wasn't until he was back home and had been discharged from the Army, that Hap Kingston began to remember some of the things that had gone before.

And especially Mike Wadsley's promise to get even.

Mr. Peters had called Hap aside into the privacy of his little back-room office. "You're out now, son," Mr. Peters had said, his voice gentle, affectionate. "You've done your duty for your country and it's all over for you. Time to settle down, think about the future. It's all here, son. Right here. Whenever you're ready to start . . ."

Hap had thought about that. His eyes had strayed to the scar across Mr. Peter's face. There was a touch of uneasiness in the alert old eyes. "Yes, Hap. Mike's out. But don't let that worry you."

"He's out! So soon?"

Mr. Peters shook his head. "Mike . . . escaped. About two months ago, I guess it was. But there's nothing to—"

"I'll be back," Hap had promised. "Mike'll be waiting to see me!"

And now Mike was down in the foothill village. He'd be up the rest of the way any time. And when he arrived—

* * * * *

HAP chuckled. It had been hard to laugh when you know death's close. Thoughtfully he stirred the stew, knowing Mike would have to come in and have his say . . . like a cat with a mouse.

Hap hadn't expected Mike to announce himself. He didn't. Mike just stepped into the room, one hand in the right pocket of his coat,

holding a stubby revolver, his slitted eyes taking in the room swiftly, and then coming to Hap.

"The hero," Mike Wadsley said in a sullen voice. "Made a pretty swell name for yourself, didn't you?"

Hap looked at him. Mike hadn't changed. His face and eyes were still as sullen and angry and threatening as ever. His thin lips were cruel lines across his face.

Carefully Hap Kingston said, "Can't you leave a guy alone? Just because you stubbed your toe—"

"Dry up," Mike snarled. "I told you I'd get even some day and I meant it. I'm here now to do just that!"

Thoughtfully, Hap Kingston stirred the stew in the kettle on the stove. He pushed it aside, jiggled the lid off and stuffed more wood in. He heard the rasp of a chair on the wood floor, turned to see Mike tilting it back against the wall. The cat and mouse act . . .

• • • • •

"WHAT are you waiting for?" Hap asked his uninvited guest. "Want to see me squirm? You won't, you yellow punk. I've been up against men who could fight. You're a wash-out beside them. So if you're hoping I'll get down on my hands and knees, grovel—"

Mike Wadsley's face whitened. "Go ahead. Make me lose my temper. You'll get a dose of hot lead sooner than you think!"

Hap got a bowl from the cupboard, ladled it full and carried it to the table. He pulled the remaining chair up . . .

"Make it two," Mike Wadsley ordered harshly. "Maybe I'm not invited . . . but I'll have some, anyhow. That wonderful cooking you've been doing on the other side!"

Hap obeyed. Mike Wadsley sat down. For a moment he ate in silence, but all the while his slitted eyes were watching Hap Kingston carefully.

"Lose your appetite?" Mike wanted to know finally. "You may as well eat. It'll be the last time—" He paused, looking at the empty bowl.

"Okay," Hap said quietly. "You want more." He filled the bowl and sat down again.

But he was nervous and certainly not hungry. He watched Mike finish the second bowl of stew hungrily, then wipe his chin and lean back.

"How's the java?" Mike wanted to know. "And no dessert? I'm used to—" He paused for a moment, greedy eyes fixed on Hap's face.

"Java?" Hap said gently. "Sure thing. Wait a sec—"

"You wait!" Mike rasped. "Sit right there. I—saaaay! That tasted okay going down, but—hey! HEY!"

For the first time Hap Kingston laughed gently. "What's the matter, Mike? Indigestion? You ate too fast."

"I—ate too—wait a minute! Something's wrong—"

• • • • •

"SURE," Hap murmured, leaning back. "Something's wrong. That stew was special for you, Mike. I've been cooking it every day for two weeks now, waiting for you to show up. I knew you'd have to eat. You always were a hog!"

"You've done something!" Mike Wadsley shrilled, and snatching at the stubby revolver in his pocket said, "You dirty—"

"It's too late, Mike," Hap Kingston said gently. "You're going to die unless you get to a saw-bones pronto. In just a few minutes now, you won't be able to help yourself. So if you kill me . . . you'll die, too, Mike. You'll die the most awful death you ever thought of, Mike. So go ahead and kill me . . . if you dare!"

Mike Wadsley's gun hand wilted. His face was white now, and little beads of sweat stood out upon his narrow forehead. He turned slowly, body trembling, knees sagging. The gun slipped from his hand. He pitched forward suddenly to his face, and lay still.

• • • • •

FOR a little while Hap Kingston sat waiting. Mike (The Chink) Wadsley lay on the floor on his back, his hands and arms securely bound. His eyes opened at last and he drew in a shuddering breath.

"You'll live," Hap informed him, standing up to get his coat and hat. "You'll live to see the inside of a prison again."

"You got a—a saw-b-bones—"

"No," Hap answered. "I didn't. I told a little white lie, Mike or a big one. I dosed that stew up. Not enough to kill you, Mike. That would have been too good for you. Just enough to make you good and sick, so you'd think you were dying."

Hap pulled his hat on, reached down and hoisted Mike Wadsley to his feet. "Get going, Mike," Hap ordered. "Right down the path. Down to the village to the sheriff's office. He'll be glad to provide transportation for you, back to prison!"

THE END

LET'S PLAY DETECTIVE

The CASE of the CLUTCHING CLAW!

A SHADOWY NIGHT ON A LONELY STREET--

SUDDENLY, THE GHASTLY CLAW STRIKES!

MY THROAT--LET GO! YAAAAAAAAA!

A FEW DAYS LATER AND AGAIN THE FIENDISH OWNER OF THE CLUTCHING CLAW SNARES A VICTIM!

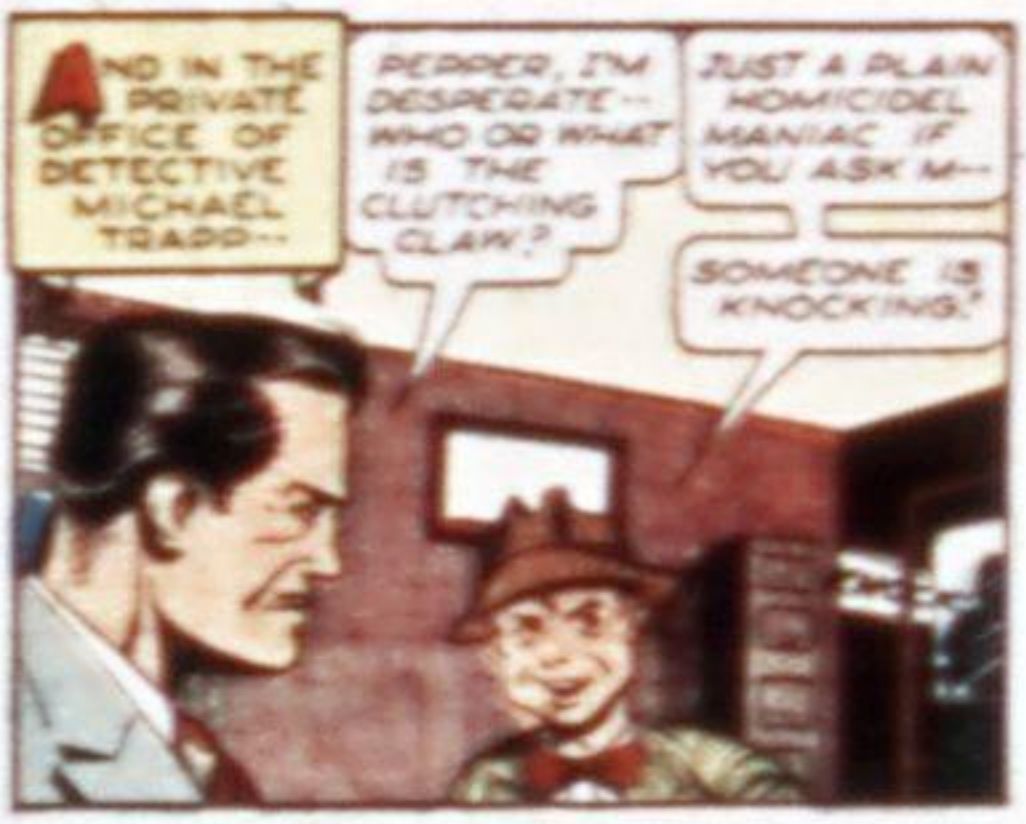
NO-NO! EEEE!

AND IN THE PRIVATE OFFICE OF DETECTIVE MICHAEL TRAPP--

PEPPER, I'M DESPERATE--WHO OR WHAT IS THE CLUTCHING CLAW?

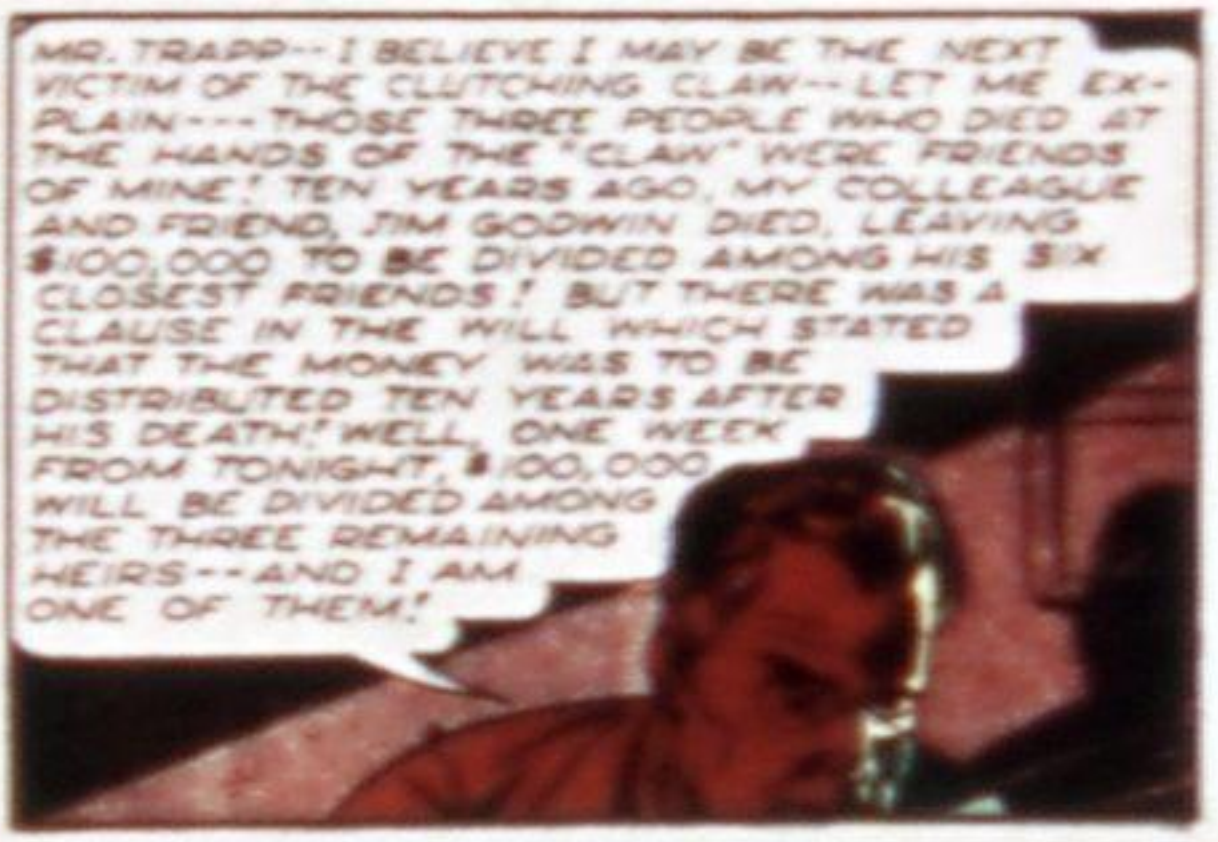
JUST A PLAIN HOMICIDAL MANIAC IF YOU ASK M--

SOMEONE IS KNOCKING!



SAY, MIKE--THERE'S SOMEONE TO SEE YOU--A MR. KEN KENNEDY!

MR. TRAPP--I BELIEVE I MAY BE THE NEXT VICTIM OF THE CLUTCHING CLAW--LET ME EXPLAIN---THOSE THREE PEOPLE WHO DIED AT THE HANDS OF THE "CLAW" WERE FRIENDS OF MINE! TEN YEARS AGO, MY COLLEAGUE AND FRIEND, JIM GODWIN DIED, LEAVING $100,000 TO BE DIVIDED AMONG HIS SIX CLOSEST FRIENDS! BUT THERE WAS A CLAUSE IN THE WILL WHICH STATED THAT THE MONEY WAS TO BE DISTRIBUTED TEN YEARS AFTER HIS DEATH! WELL, ONE WEEK FROM TONIGHT, $100,000 WILL BE DIVIDED AMONG THE THREE REMAINING HEIRS--AND I AM ONE OF THEM!



MR. KENNEDY, ARE YOU TRYING TO TELL ME THAT ONE OF THE HEIRS IS THE MURDEROUS CLAW, FOR THE SOLE PURPOSE OF COLLECTING ALL THAT MONEY FOR HIMSELF?

YES--MR. TRAPP--STRANGE AS IT MAY SEEM! HERE ARE THE NAMES AND ADDRESSES OF THESE MEN--

WHY, THESE ARE THE NAMES OF OUR TOWN'S WEALTHIEST MEN--WILLIAM GRAYSTON IS A BANKER AND JOHN ROY OWNS A STRING OF DEPARTMENT STORES!

BUT NEVERTHELESS, I BELIEVE THERE'S MORE TO THIS THEN WE KNOW--MR. KENNEDY--I HAVE A PLAN--YOU'RE THIS TOWN'S LEADING ATTORNEY---I WANT YOU TO NOTIFY THE PAPERS THAT YOU'RE LEAVING TOWN AND WILL RETURN IN TIME FOR THE READING OF THE WILL!

SAY, PEPPER--- DOESN'T "FINGERS" FARRELL RESEMBLE MR. KENNEDY?

YOU MEAN THAT PICK-POCKET? WHY, HE'S JUST BEEN RELEASED FROM THE STATE PEN!

LATER THAT NIGHT

SO THE PAPERS SAY KENNEDY IS LEAVING T---- AH--THERE HE IS NOW!

TRYING TO GET AWAY, EH, KENNEDY?

IT'S A TRAP! THE POLICE!

ESCAPED--JUST AS I THOUGHT--DID YOU GET WHAT I WANT, FINGERS?

YEAH--TRAPP!

PEPPER--- OUR KILLER IS NONE OTHER THAN WILLIAM GRAYSTON, THE BANKER!

LATER--

SO GRAYSTON CONFESSED! HE KILLED SO HE COULD GET ALL OF THE $100,000 WHICH HE NEEDED TO COVER A LARGE AMOUNT OF MONEY WHICH HE EMBEZZLED FROM HIS BANK! BUT HOW DID YOU KNOW IT WAS GRAYSTON?

THE KILLER READ THAT KENNEDY WAS LEAVING TOWN AND KNEW HE HAD TO KILL HIM BEFORE HE LEFT; BUT DISGUISED AS KENNEDY WAS PICKPOCKET FINGERS FARRELL--- WHEN FARRELL WAS ATTACKED, HE JUST PICKED THE KILLER'S WALLET AND THAT'S HOW WE LEARNED THE KILLER WAS GRAYSTON---

TURN PAGE FOR SOLUTION

CAPTAIN AMERICA

BATTLES COLOSSO AND HIS MURDER MARIONETTES !!!

CAPTAIN AMERICA FOLLOWS A BLOODY TRAIL... MARKED WITH MYSTERIOUS MURDER AND ROBBERY... TO MEET IN A BATTLE TO THE DEATH... A CUNNING AND FEARSOME ADVERSARY... COLOSSO!!

...AWED SPECTATORS GAPE AT THE PRIZE EXHIBIT AT THE COUNTY FAIR...

YOU TOO, CAN GAIN ENORMOUS STRENGTH! IN THIS BOTTLE IS CONTAINED THE SECRET, A FORMULA HANDED DOWN TO ME BY MY ANCESTORS!

COUNTY FAIR

GARWSH! LOOK'A DAT!

AND WHEN THE MARIONETTE SHOW IS OVER...

DON'T GO AWAY, FOLKS, ASSISTANTS WILL PASS AMONG YOU AND HAND OUT MY MARVELOUS ELIXIR AT THE RIDICULOUSLY LOW SUM OF ONE DOLLAR PER BOTTLE!

...AND MEANWHILE...

KEEP LOOKIN' SHARP! WE DON'T WANT ANY SLIP UPS 'TILL CAPTAIN AMERICA GETS HERE!

YESSIR, SHERIFF!

WONDER WHY CAPTAIN AMERICA SUSPECTS THOSE MEDICINE SHOW BIRDS OF ALL THE MURDERS AND ROBBERIES!

HE HIT ON THE FACT THAT THEY ALL HAPPENED IN OR NEAR THE TOWNS THE SHOW WAS PLAYIN'!

BACK AT THE MEDICINE SHOW...

I DON'T LIKE THE LOOKS OF THINGS! I SPOTTED THE SHERIFF!

STOP SNIVELING! I'M RUNNING THINGS!

IT'S A PERFECT SET-UP -- WITH THAT STUPID SHERIFF WATCHING! THE TROUBLE WITH YOU IS, YOU'VE GOT NO IMAGINATION!

...AND A FEW MOMENTS LATER, AS BUCKY AND CAPTAIN AMERICA PASS THROUGH THE TOWN ON THEIR WAY TO THE SHERIFF...

BANG! BANG! HELP!

SHOTS!

AND A CRY FOR HELP! COME ON!

WAHOO, CAP! LET'S GO!

SOMETHING FUNNY ABOUT THOSE CROOKS!

LOOKOUT! IT'S CAPTAIN AMERICA!

THIS'LL TEACH YOU TO SHOOT AT ME, YOU OLD DEVIL!

AHH!

ULP!

BANG!

BEL COUNTY BANK

LOOKOUT, CAP! THE LEAD IS SPOUTING!

SO, YOU'D SLUG A HELPLESS OLD MAN, EH?

YOW!

BAM!

CAREFUL, CAP!

DOWN BUCKY!

LET'S GET OUTTA HERE!

BAM! BAM!

COME ON, CAP! THEY'RE GETTING AWAY!

WE'LL HAVE TO LET THEM FOR THE TIME BEING! THE OLD WATCHMAN IS IN A BAD WAY! WE MUST GET HIM TO A DOCTOR IMMEDIATELY!

LATER... AT THE DOCTORS...

PUPPETS--- PAINTED CHEEKS BANK--PUPPETS-

HE'S DELIRIOUS-- BUT WILL PULL THROUGH--- THANKS TO YOUR GOOD WORK!

SURE, IT TIES IN WITH YOUR THEORY THAT THE COLOSSO GUY IS BEHIND THE KILLING--BUT THE WATCHMAN WAS DELIRIOUS WHEN HE SAID ALL THAT STUFF!

WELL, LET'S GET TO THE FAIR GROUNDS AND FIND OUT WHAT THE SHERIFF KNOWS!

FAIR GROUNDS

CAP AND THE SHERIFF EXCHANGE REPORTS ON THE MYSTERIOUS HAPPENINGS..

COLOSSO AND THE INDIAN WERE HERE ALL THE TIME, SO THAT LET THEM OUT!

I WONDER! COME ON! I WANT TO TALK TO THIS COLOSSO!

..AND A FEW MOMENTS LATER...

I'VE A GOOD MIND TO TAKE YOU IN ANY-WAY!

GO ON, SHERIFF! BUT WHAT WOULD THE COURT SAY? YOU YOURSELF, WOULD BE MY ALIBI! YOU CAN'T DENY THAT WE WERE HERE AT THE MOMENT OF THE ROBBERY!

YES! YOU WERE HERE, BUT NOT THE PUPPETS! AND I'M GOING TO HAVE A GOOD LOOK AT THEM!

HAVE A GOOD LOOK!

DON'T TELL ME, THAT THE GREAT CAP-TAIN AMERICA AIN'T GOT IT ALL FIGURED OUT YET!

WHY---! YOU OVER-GROWN MASS OF MEAT, I'LL...

EASY, LAD!

...AFTER A FRUITLESS SEARCH...

AND NOW, IF YOU MEDDLING SHERLOCKS WILL EXCUSE ME, I'VE HAD A TRYING DAY AND IT'S A LONG HALL TO THE NEXT TOWN!

AND COLOSSO LEAVES EXULTANTLY.....

LOOK AT HIM WAVE! AS IF HE WERE LAUGHING AT US!

COME ON, BUCKY, WE'VE A DATE IN THE NEXT TOWN, WITH COLOSSO!

RIGHT!

I THINK I KNOW HOW HE DOES IT NOW!

WHAT D'YA MEAN, TAKE A CLOSER LOOK?

I KNOW! BUT I WANT TO HAVE A CLOSER LOOK AT HIS PUPPETS!

AND THE NEXT DAY..

I DON'T SEE ANY SENSE IN WATCHING COLOSSO! HE'S ALWAYS AT HIS SHOW WHEN THE MURDERS OCCUR!

BUT WHY ARE YOU LEAVING?

WE'RE NOT! COME ON! WE HAVE WORK TO DO!

KEEP OUT OF SIGHT! I DON'T WANT ANYONE SPOTTING US!

SA-A-AY! CAP!

LOOK! A TRAP DOOR OPENING IN THE FLOOR OF THE TRAILER!

AND I HAVE A PRETTY GOOD IDEA WHAT IT'S BEING USED FOR! LET'S GO LAD!

AFTER THEM BUCKY!

YIPE!

BACK! BACK INTO THE TRAILER! IT'S CAPTAIN AMERICA!

BOP!

GOOD GOSH! THE PUPPETS!

TWO DUCKED BACK INSIDE! I'LL GET 'EM!

GOOD! AND I'LL GET AROUND TO THE FRONT AND SEE THAT COLOSSO DOESN'T ESCAPE!

CLIMBING AFTER THE TWO FLEEING PUPPETS-- BUCKY DISCOVERS THEIR SECRET HIDING PLACE...

YOW! PRETTY SLICK! THE TRUCK HAS A FALSE BOTTOM! SO THIS IS WHERE COLOSSO HID HIS RATS!

THE JIG'S UP! YOU MURDERING MONSTER!

COLOSSO! CAPTAIN AMERICA IS AFTER US!

WHAT THE?

MEANWHILE...

KRASH!

THAT'S GOING TO BE MORE DIFFICULT THAN YOU THINK!

QUICK! GET THE TRUCK STARTED! I'LL TAKE CARE OF CAPTAIN AMERICA! OOOOFF!

OWP

WITH A GRINDING, CRASHING ROAR OF GEARS -- THE HUGE TRUCK LURCHES INTO MOTION

I'M FALLING!

HEY! WE'RE MOVING!

I'LL SAVE YOU SO I CAN HAVE THE PLEASURE OF PERSONALLY KILLING YOU!

HA! HA!

HEY! THIS GIANT IS HANDLING ME LIKE A BABY!

HA HA! EVERY BONE IN YOUR BODY WILL BE SMASHED ON THE JAGGED ROCKS, HUNDREDS OF FEET BELOW!

NO USE TRYING TO STRUGGLE FREE OF THIS MONSTER'S POWERFUL HOLD! MY ONLY CHANCE IS TO USE MY FEET!

CAREFUL, CAP!!

OWW!

CRACK!

LIKE THIS!

AND THIS!

POW!

YA-A-A-A!

JUMP CAP! THE TRUCK IS OUT OF CONTROL!

AND LATER...

HOW DO YOU FIND OUT THAT COLOSSO HAS SUBSTITUTING HIS LIVE PUPPETS FOR THE MARIONETTES?

BY WATCHING CLOSELY! REAL MARIONETTES DON'T WRINKLE THEIR NOSES AT ANNOYING FLIES!

CAP AND BUCKY LEAP TO SAFETY AS THE HUGE TRUCK CRASHES THROUGH THE RAIL...

CRASH!

The End

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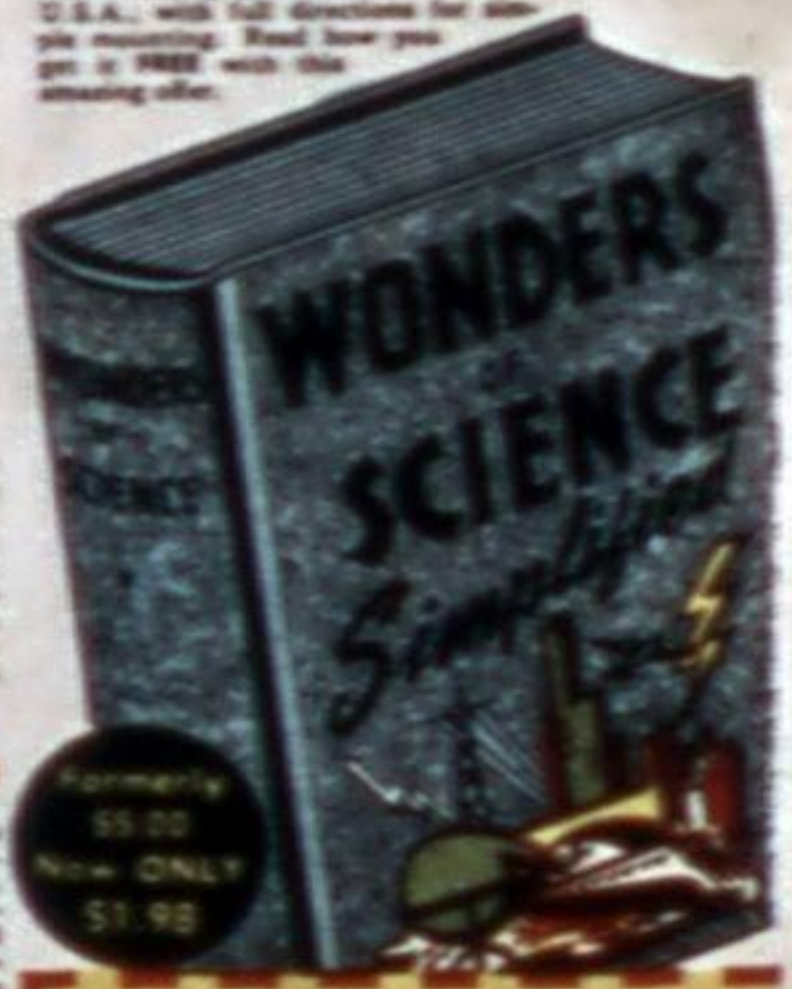

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